CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND[1]

THE DISCOVERY OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

THE Philippine Islands have been "discovered" many times. They were first "discovered" by the inhabitants of Asia and Oceanica during ages shrouded in antiquity. The Islands were next "discovered" on the circumnavigation of the globe by Ferdinand Magellan. The Islands were again "discovered" when Commodore George Dewey fought the Battle of Manila Bay and brought the Philippines within the geographical ken of America. And there was "self-discovery" of the Philippines by the Filipinos when within recent years they became race-conscious and began to move about and know their own country.

The characteristic statement to be found in the books is that the Philippine Islands were "discovered" by Ferdinand Magellan on March 16, I52I.[2] If by this is meant that the Philippines was then brought to the notice of Europe, the statement is correct. But long before Magellan set eyes on the Island of Samar and entered into a blood compact with the chief of Cebu in the Philippines, the Islands were known to other countries, and particularly to China. Just as old Nankin porcelain has been found in the Zimbabwe ruins in South

[1] This chapter was read by Dr. Gregorio Zaide of the Department of History,

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[2] March 16, 1521, old-style Gregorian calendar, if Antonio Pigafetta's journal, Francisco Albo's log-book, and *The Molvccis Insvlis* are to be believed.
March 17, 1521, if the failure to take into account the crossing of the International date line is to be rectified. March 14, 1521, if the inscription "March 14., 1521" found on some granite rocks on the Island of Homonhon is to be considered authentic.